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Committee for Programme and Coordination
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Agenda item 7
Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fifty-third session

Draft report

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Addendum

Programme questions: evaluation
(*Item 3 (b)*)

Strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives

1. At its 3rd meeting on 4 June 2013, the Committee considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives (A/68/70).

2. The Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services introduced the report and responded to questions raised during the Committee's consideration of the report.

Discussion

3. Delegations expressed appreciation for the quality of the report of OIOS on strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives. They recalled the recommendations adopted by the Committee, emphasizing that evaluation was a key function not only for the adoption of budgetary decisions, but also for the formulation of policy directives. They also stressed the importance of the greater impact that evaluation should have on the medium- and long-term strategic planning of the United Nations system.

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4. It was noted by some delegations, as the Committee had done during its fifty-first session, that the effectiveness of evaluation depended on, among other factors, the quality of management indicators. For that purpose, the need to improve the methodology for conducting assessments and to ensure regular follow-up on the progress achieved was increasingly clear. The recommendation on the need to apply a more systematic approach to evaluating activities by OIOS in terms of the better exploitation of complementarities and synergies among all relevant United Nations departments, adopted by the Committee during the fifty-first session, was reaffirmed.

5. The Committee noted the uneven and not systematic application of the evaluation function throughout the Secretariat and that the level of skills and competencies of the staff in different departments was generally inadequate, owing inter alia, to insufficient training. The Committee further reaffirmed that the evaluation function, in particular self-evaluation, was an essential managerial tool and that it was the responsibility of managers at the senior level to achieve the expected results and to ensure that relevant staff were adequately competent.

6. The Committee also noted with concern that the lack of a proper evaluation function could hamper the implementation of mandates, in particular by affecting the work planning exercise, which was necessary in order to carry out the mandates and to facilitate the adoption of strategic planning decisions.

7. A number of delegations raised serious concerns regarding the inadequacy of and gaps within the evaluation function. Several delegations noted that evaluation was not being used as a management tool and that the activities of the Organization should be subject to integrated management which incorporated planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring, inspection and evaluation. A number of delegations recognized the importance of evaluation for providing timely and high-quality information that could contribute to improved planning, transparency and accountability. Moreover, they noted that evaluation was an important function for ascertaining whether programmes were achieving their goals and for capturing lessons learned.

8. Regarding financial and human resources for evaluation, it was noted by several delegations that that issue was not within the mandate of the Committee and should be dealt with in another forum. Nevertheless, questions were raised as to the parameters for sufficient evaluation resources. In addition, the comment was made that despite the provision of significant resources and the increased emphasis placed on evaluation in recent years, clear benefits were not being seen. The view was also expressed that, as OIOS had indicated, "a lack of management support for and buy-in to evaluation" was a major concern, and it would seem clear that until that issue was resolved, the provision of additional resources would be unlikely to yield the results that Member States might expect.

9. Regarding the lack of an evaluation culture within the Secretariat, in particular, a number of delegations indicated that that state of affairs was discouraging and delegations were concerned that evaluation was considered a burden more than a useful tool. Concern was also expressed by some delegations that the Committee was seen as a constraint and a hindrance. That view was not shared by the delegations; in fact, delegations saw the Committee as performing an important role to ensure that the Secretariat was correctly translating mandates into programme delivery.

10. A number of delegations generally concurred that the Committee must make strong recommendations addressing the critical evaluation gaps identified in the OIOS report, for example the possibility of including the use of evaluation by programmes as an additional indicator in the compact of the Secretary-General with his senior managers and of holding managers responsible in that regard.

11. As to evaluation competencies, it was noted by some delegations that resources were not the only obstacle to effective evaluation; as stated in the report, the weakness of competencies in the field of evaluation was also an obstacle. The point was made that training alone might not close the gap identified with regard to uneven evaluation competencies.

12. Delegations also raised several questions regarding the methodology for the OIOS report, including whether OIOS participated in interviews with Secretariat programmes and the reasons why donor evaluations had been excluded from the assessment and an external expert had been engaged to assess the quality of Secretariat evaluation reports. A few delegations also questioned the ways in which gender and human rights could be integrated into all evaluations in all programmes. At the same time, several delegations sought further clarification from OIOS on the differences between evaluation conducted by OIOS and evaluation conducted by the programmes themselves, and the apparent confusion within the Secretariat between monitoring and evaluation.

Conclusions and recommendations

13. **The Committee emphasized that some progress had been achieved by OIOS in the implementation of the Committee's recommendations made during its fifty-first session on ensuring that evaluation reports focus on programme impact and results achieved, improving the methodology for conducting assessments, including regular follow-up on the progress made, applying a more systematic approach to evaluation activities, including exploitation of complementarities and synergies of all activities, and strengthening coordination among all relevant departments.**

14. **The Committee noted with satisfaction the evaluation results; the reports received a "good" or "excellent" quality rating when analysed in terms of their contents, including in five programmes in the area of the development of Africa.**

15. **The Committee expressed its concern that, despite OIOS actions and initiatives which had led to a degree of progress during the biennium, the goal of ensuring the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives in the Organization was far from being reached, and that the overall capacity for evaluation remained inadequate for several reasons, including:**

(a) **The lack of a robust and comprehensive evaluation culture and policies in the Secretariat;**

(b) **The lack of management support, leadership, accountability and buy-in;**

(c) **Gaps in the skills and competencies of staff, and insufficient training;**

(d) **The lack of dedicated personnel for evaluation;**

(e) **The lack of clear identification of resources related to evaluation;**

(f) **Shortfalls in the quality of management indicators;**

(g) **Critical gaps in the evaluation functions.**

16. **The Committee noted with concern that the overall quality rating of evaluation reports in 2010-2011 was below average.**

17. **The Committee noted that the effectiveness of evaluation depended on, among other factors, the quality of management indicators.**

18. **The Committee emphasized that evaluation was a key function for the adoption of budgetary decisions, since it not only helped to improve programme design and execution, as well as the formulation of policy directives, but also contributed to transparency, effective implementation of intergovernmental mandates and the maximization of the use of resources. At the same time, it allowed Member States to follow up on programme outcomes in a systematic way.**

19. **The Committee also emphasized that the evaluation function, in particular self-evaluation, was an essential managerial tool and that it was the responsibility of senior managers to achieve the expected results.**

20. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to take further, concrete measures to develop capacity for evaluation within the Secretariat programmes, with support provided by OIOS and external oversight bodies in terms of guidance and methodological advice.**

21. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to continue to make better use of in-house expertise, including, where possible, expertise available in OIOS to carry out evaluations in the different entities of the Secretariat, taking advantage of the experience acquired by the internal and external oversight bodies, and to ensure that all efforts are made to avoid duplication and/or overlapping of evaluation functions in the Secretariat.**

22. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to ensure that senior managers' compacts present adequate programme objectives and performance measures in order to fulfil given mandates in accordance with relevant rules and regulations, and that the evaluation function receives due consideration in the performance appraisal of the senior managers.**

23. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to take concrete measures at the appropriate levels to ensure that the existing significant gaps in evaluation coverage and the lack of evaluative evidence on performance are addressed.**

24. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to entrust OIOS with harmonizing, to the extent possible, a format for its evaluation reports, including findings, conclusions and recommendations.**

25. **The Committee selected for consideration at its fifty-fifth session in 2015 the following programme evaluations: Economic and social development in**

Asia and the Pacific; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; United Nations Human Settlements Programme; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; International Trade Centre; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women; as well as the thematic evaluation of Monitoring and evaluation of the Millennium Development Goals: lessons learned.